

Statement of
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U.S Department of Energy
before the
Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce and Agency Organization
Committee on Government Reform
U. S. House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am Paul Golan, a career civil servant, and have acted as the Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) since May 2005. I previously served in the Department of Energy's environmental management organization and prior to that as an officer in the United States Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

I have been asked by this Subcommittee to testify on quality assurance (QA) issues at Yucca Mountain. In order for my testimony to be productive and meaningful, I would like to provide this Subcommittee my perspective on quality assurance.

When most people speak about quality assurance, they may envision an organization of auditors armed with checklists and pencil stubs, counting beans and making sure all the boxes are checked. That is not quality assurance; rather, it is an audit or an assessment. While that is a necessary component of a good QA program, it is not the most important part.

When I speak of quality assurance, I am referring to an organizational culture... that is, a collection of an organization's **standards, actions, behaviors**, and ultimately its **performance**. People and organizations that set high **standards, act** professionally, **behave** responsibly, and **perform** in accordance with requirements embody good quality.

These characteristics are critical to an organization's ability to function effectively in a regulated environment, especially a regulated nuclear environment.

Quality is an organizational trait that is *earned* by an organization's living up to its **standards** and is *demonstrated* by its actions and its performance.

Over the years, the Yucca Mountain QA program has been reviewed by many independent organizations including the Government Accountability Office and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, as well as the by the Department of Energy's Office of the Inspector General, all of whom are represented here today. The set of documents to my left represents a compilation of the reports that have resulted from quality assurance reviews. The reports, which go back to the 1980's, address past deficiencies in the Yucca Mountain quality assurance program and have found that despite the development of corrective action plans, deficiencies have not been completely corrected and the same issues tend to reappear. In nearly all of these reviews, the Department concurred with the findings and instituted corrective action plans to address the deficiencies. I have read the reports and I agree with their findings. The quality assurance program and the culture of this organization do not currently meet my standards or expectations.

In my view, corrective action plans require two critical components: **focus** and **accountability**.

With respect to the first component, we need to consider whether we are focusing on addressing the symptoms, or whether we are addressing the root cause. It's like taking an aspirin for a headache; if the headache keeps coming back maybe the aspirin is the wrong medicine. We need to **focus** on the cause, not merely the symptom.

Second is **accountability**. Accountability is critical for any organization, any program, or any system to be successful. Individuals are trained on the requirements and understand the requirements; managers and leaders mentor their staff and enforce the requirements. If people or managers are then unwilling or unable to meet those

requirements, they need to be held accountable for their actions, with consequences ranging from counseling to letters of reprimand to potentially being removed from this project.

At the Yucca Mountain site, it is important to recognize that the vast majority of the nearly two-thousand people who work on this project, many of them citizens of Nevada, perform good work, have high standards, behave professionally, and perform to our standards and requirements day-in and day-out. At the same time, we recognize that the actions of a few, or the actions of an individual, can drastically undermine confidence and damage the reputation of hundreds of credible, honest, and trustworthy people who have worked very long and hard on this project.

We have established the following expectations for the leaders and managers of our organization:

- They need to monitor ongoing activities and address quality assurance issues immediately.
- They need to communicate quality assurance issues to senior management quickly and effectively.
- They need to do that today, and they need to do it again tomorrow and the day after, until it becomes a habit.

Habits, good or bad, help define who we are as individuals and as organizations. Habits, over time, become our culture.

Let me turn to the infiltration work that the U.S. Geological Survey performed for the Department, and which we discussed in our technical report issued in February 2006. We found the infiltration estimates were consistent with the conclusions of other independent scientists; however, our QA requirements were not met, and we are expending significant time and resources to carry out additional analysis to ensure the infiltration work has been properly performed.

More recently, we also suspended the authority of the management and operating contractor to approve quality documents in the area of design because there was not a proper establishment of design requirements in accordance with our procedures. While we were not required to take that action, we did it to address any potential issues before moving forward with our new design.

We stopped work at the site when a communications cable being laid in the exploratory tunnel did not meet established requirements. Workers brought that to our attention, and we appreciate and applaud their actions. We are taking steps to address this issue.

We also stopped work associated with use of chemical standards because we found that procedures used to procure those standards did not meet our specifications. We are taking steps to address this issue, as well.

Currently, we are investigating the calibration and use of humidity/temperature probes by one of our national laboratories. After we understand the facts, we will, in a deliberate way, hold managers and individuals accountable for their actions as well as recognize those who identify issues.

We are taking aggressive action to find any quality assurance issues and address them. But let me digress for a moment. I do not want to give the impression that a good QA program is defined by the absence of issues...we will find situations that do not meet our requirements and that will require us to act. We believe that, with a good QA program, we will find these situations early, within hours or days rather than months or years, and correct issues while they are small. Early detection and prompt action is our goal.

Two additional items that I would like to highlight are the selection of a University Consortium to perform independent reviews of our technical work products and the implementation of the Safety Conscious Work Environment, or SCWE, across the entire Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Program.

Ensuring the quality and culture of this organization is our single highest priority for the project. The Department will seek to demonstrate good quality, good science, and good processes in our license application and across the entire organization. This concludes my opening statement.